

Message Text

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ACTION EUR-25

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 CIAE-00 PM-07 INR-10 L-03 NEA-10

NSAE-00 PA-03 RSC-01 PRS-01 SPC-03 USIA-15 TRSE-00

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SUBJECT: BELGIAN CONSCRIPT SERVICE

REF: BRUSSELS 5341

QUOTED BELOW FOR INFORMATION IS AN INFORMAL MISSION TRANSLATION OF A LETTER DATED SEPTEMBER 14, 1973 FROM THE BELGIAN PERMREP TO THE SECRETARY GENERAL REGARDING PROPOSED REDUCTION IN TERM OF MILITARY SERVICE IN BELGIUM.

QUOTE

MY DEAR SECRETARY GENERAL:

AS A FOLLOW-UP TO THE LETTER I WROTE TO YOU ON 17 NOVEMBER, 1972, WHICH SPECIFIED THE SCOPE OF THE BELGIAN GOVERNMENT'S INTENTIONS IN REGARD TO A POSSIBLE REDUCTION OF MILITARY SERVICE IN BELGIUM, MY GOVERNMENT HAS REQUESTED ME TO COMMUNICATE THE FOLLOWING TO YOU.

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THE BELGIAN GOVERNMENT, CONCERNED ABOUT INCREASING THE EFFICIENCY OF THE UNITS ASSIGNED TO THE ALLIANCE OR IN RESERVE FOR SUCH ASSIGNMENT, ANXIOUS TO RESPECT ITS COMMITMENTS INTEGRALLY, ENVISAGES

COMPOSING THE UNITS MADE AVAILABLE TO THE ALLIANCE ENTIRELY WITH CAREER PERSONNEL, CALLING UPON THE VOLUNTEER SYSTEM INSTEAD OF WHAT HAS BEEN ADOPTED BY OTHER COUNTRIES IN THE ALLIANCE.

THUS, AND SIMULTANEOUSLY WITH THE RECRUITMENT AND AVAILABILITY OF THE NEW CAREER PERSONNEL, THE LENGTH OF SERVICE FOR THE MILITIAMEN CAN BE PROGRESSIVELY REDUCED FROM 12 TO 6 MONTHS.

MY GOVERNMENT REQUESTS ME TO LAY STRESS ON THE POSITIVE CHARACTER WHICH THE EXECUTION OF THIS PLAN WILL HAVE; INDEED, REDUCTION OF THE LENGTH OF SERVICE WILL BE ACHIEVED ONLY DEPENDING ON THE ACTUAL RE-CRUITMENT OF THE VOLUNTEERS. IN OTHER WORDS, THE REDUCTION OF THE LENGTH OF SERVICE WILL IN NO WAY BE PREJUDICIAL TO THE UNITS MADE AVAILABLE TO THE ALLIANCE FOR CARRYING OUT ITS PURPOSES AND OUR COMMITMENTS. ON THE CONTRARY, THE OPERATIONAL UNITS WILL BE PROGRESSIVELY MADE UP OF CAREER PERSONNEL, WHICH WILL NOT FAIL TO INCREASE THEIR QUALITY AND STABILIZE THEIR QUANTITATIVE LEVELS.

MY GOVERNMENT ALSO REQUESTS ME TO INFORM YOU THAT THIS PLAN WILL NOT BE CARRIED OUT TO THE PREJUDICE OF THE EXISTING EFFORT NOR TO THE DETRIMENT OF THE RESOURCES TO BE RESERVED FOR THE CONTINUAL FUNCTIONING AND MODERNIZATION OF OUR EQUIPMENTS, BUT THAT IT HAS PROVIDED FOR NEW RESOURCES COMING TO SUPPLEMENT ITS KNOWN FINANCIAL COMMITMENTS.

IT IS ESTIMATED, TAKING INTO ACCOUNT RECRUITMENT POSSIBILITIES, THAT A PERIOD OF FIVE YEARS WILL BE REQUIRED FOR CARRYING OUT THE PLAN

INTEGRALLY. THE NEW BUDGETARY INCREASE PROVIDED FOR IS ON THE ORDER OF 850 MILLION BELGIAN FRANCS ANNUALLY, WHICH WILL REPRESENT, IN 1978, APPROXIMATELY FOUR BILLION 200 MILLION BELGIAN FRANCS.

THE OPERATIONAL FORCES MADE AVAILABLE TO THE ALLIANCE, ACCORDING TO OUR INTERNATIONAL COMMITMENTS, WILL THUS BE CHARACTERIZED IN THE FUTURE BY GENERALIZED PROFESSIONALIZATION AND THE GREATER PART OF THESE FORCES WILL CONSIST OF CAREER PERSONNEL RECEIVING INTENSIVE SPECIALIZED TRAINING.

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THE MILITIA PERSONNEL WHOSE LENGTH OF SERVICE WILL BE REDUCED PROGRESSIVELY WILL BE ASSIGNED TO FORCES UNDER NATIONAL COMMAND, ENTRUSTED

WITH THE PROTECTION OF THE POPULATION, OF VITAL SPOTS AND OF LINES OF COMMUNICATION AND ALSO ENTRUSTED, BY VIRTUE OF OUR NATIONAL RESPONSIBILITIES,

WITH THE LOGISTIC AND ADMINISTRATIVE SUPPORT OF THE OPERATIONAL FORCES. THESE FORCES WOULD THUS BE COMPOSED, IN PRINCIPAL ORDER, OF MILITIAMEN TRAINED AND LED BY CAREER OFFICERS AND NON-COMMISSIONED OFFICERS, THE MILITIAMEN'S MISSION REQUIRING ONLY A LIMITED SPECIALI-

ZATION AND SIMPLIFIED TRAINING.

FOR CARRYING OUT THESE REFORMS WHICH WILL PERMIT, IN FIVE YEARS,
TO REDUCE PROGRESSIVELY THE LENGTH OF MILITARY SERVICE TO SIX MONTHS,
THE GOVERNMENT HAS CONSTANTLY BEEN GUIDED BY ITS CONCERN IN RESPECTING

ITS COMMITMENTS TOWARD THE NORTH ATLANTIC TREATY ORGANIZATION AND NOTAB-

BLY IN MAINTAINING AND IMPROVING THE QUALITY AND LEVEL OF ITS DEFENSE
EFFORT. THE ALLIANCE WILL RECEIVE ALL THE NECESSARY INFORMATION WHEN
MORE PRECISE PLANS WILL HAVE BEEN ELABORATED IN ORDER TO CARRY OUT THE

INTENTIONS OF THE BELGIAN GOVERNMENT WHICH THIS LETTER IS CONVEYING
TO YOU.

THE REFORM ENVISAGED BY MY GOVERNMENT WILL BE FINALIZED ONLY
AFTER ELABORATE CONSULTATION ON THE INTERNAL AS WELL AS THE EX-
TERMINAL LEVELS. BEFORE IT CAN BE SUBMITTED TO PARLIAMENT, THE ARMY
RESTRUCTURING PLAN WILL HAVE TO BE THE SUBJECT OF NORMAL
CONSULTATIONS PROVIDED FOR WITHIN THE ALLIANCE.

FROM NOW ON, I AM AT YOUR DISPOSAL TO WORK OUT WITH YOU THE
METHOD TO BE USED FOR THESE CONSULTATIONS.

I AM TAKING THE LIBERTY OF SENDING A COPY OF THIS LETTER TO ALL
MY COLLEAGUES ON THE DEFENSE PLANNING COMMITTEE, AS WELL AS TO THE
CHAIRMAN OF THE MILITARY COMMITTEE, SACEUR AND CINCHAN.

PLEASE BELIEVE ME, MY DEAR COLLEAGUE, VERY TRULY YOURS,
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A. DE STAERCKE

END QUOTE
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